



Governor Terry E. Branstad
Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds
San Wong, Director

Iowa Department of Human Rights Board

Lucas State Office Building

September 15, 2015

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Members Present: Floyd Winter, Chair; Clair Rudison, Sal Alaniz, Ben Jung (phone), Sherri Soich (phone), Karen Mackey (phone), San Wong (ex-officio)

Members Absent: Senator Hart (ex-officio), Beth Coonan, Anne Brown, Michele Ray-Michelac, Theresa Legg, Jason Glass, Representative Thede (ex-officio)

Staff: Mary Bowser, Budget Analyst; Steve Michael, CJJP Administrator; Monica Stone, CAS Administrator; Jerry McKim, CAA Division; Rebecca Adair, Temporary Staff.

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Winter called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. A quorum was present. Introductions were made.

2. Action Item: Approve May 1, 2015 minutes.

Alaniz moved to approve the May 1, 2015 minutes, seconded by Rudison. Chair Winter asked if there were any questions or discussion regarding the minutes. Rudison noted a change to Number 4: Board Member Updates in the section on the Commission of African Americans. The reference to the "Simpson Project" needs to be changed to the "Sentencing Project." Chair Winter also noted a change on Page 4, indicating that there is no "s" on his last name. Chair Winter asked if there were any other corrections or changes to the minutes. Hearing none, the minutes were approved.

3. Department Report

Director Wong stated that the agenda indicated there would be both a review of the DHR Strategic Plan and the DHR Performance Measures. She indicated that meetings on performance measures with the Governor's office were still taking place, so it would be best to defer that topic until a later date.

Strategic Plan: Director Wong discussed the department's strategic plan. The department has completed the transition that was called for in the 2010 Departmental re-organization and is now moving in the direction of working at the systems level.

Director Wong gave an overview of the Department's guiding principles – applying resources in thoughtful ways to make a difference, making wise use of our resources, bring proactive in our outreach and communication, that we are responsive in the areas where we provide direct services and that we provide meaningful referrals for individuals when clients need those connections to other agencies or organizations.

Director Wong discussed the importance of grants and grant management, and that the Department focuses on ensuring that grant funds are directed in a way that makes the best use of them at the local level. There is a great deal of thought and work involved to effectively manage grants, and the Department provides effective oversight and leadership, not just pass-through of federal funds.

Director Wong shared that the Department has emphasized the importance of partnerships and expanding the capacity of other agencies to meet the needs of underrepresented Iowans. The Department is consistently examining new opportunities for cross-agency partnerships, and Director Wong spends time with other department directors to discuss strategies for other agencies to reach underrepresented Iowans.

Director Wong then went on to briefly discuss the strategic goal summary. DHR has established three main goals:

- Provide support for the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government.
- Implement programs and services to support identified priorities of the current administration and make sure that these areas are receiving needed resources.
- Expand capacity by ensuring that representatives from the department are in attendance at conferences, presentations, and functions that pertain to DHR

Rudison indicated that he was interested in seeing the performance measures once they are completed. Director Wong said that they will be made available, but that if the Board wanted to discuss anything in particular, we could do that; however, we are still working through some of the measures at this time.

4. Action Item: Approve FY2017 DHR Budget

Chair Winter then asked Director Wong to review the DHR budget.

Director Wong reminded Board members that the state is on a two-year budget cycle, so the information in the Board packet is not new material. However, the Iowa Code mandates that the Board review and approve the budget annually.

Director Wong identified items that are still pending or unknown, such as the potential for a Governor's salary bill, which would fund some or all of the increases in staffing costs for state agencies. She emphasized that the budget is very lean, with the majority of the appropriated funds allocated to staff salaries.

Further budget cuts cannot be made to other areas, such as travel. We are obligated to bring each Commission and Board together four times a year, and other travel money is earmarked to deploy staff for various programs state-wide. Because of our budget limitations, there is little to no cushion for urgent items and often times, initiatives have to be deferred, or work-around strategies have to be determined.

Overall, our budget limits the ability of DHS to be as timely in its responsiveness as it wants to be. This concern points directly to the increasing need to work with other agencies or entities that have the ability to be more readily responsive to individual people's concerns. DHR has done a good job of building relationships to ensure those partnerships are productive and useful.

Chair Winter asked, since we don't have much control over the state appropriations, and no control over the federal appropriations, do we have any kind of input on those allocations on the column labeled "other" showing a balance of \$12 million dollars.

Bowser explained that the funds in this column are for very specific purposes, such as funds passed through from utility companies for energy assistance, or funds from the Department of Human Services for the Family Development and Self Sufficiency Program. There are also funds for which DHR serves as the fiscal agent.

Steve Michael added that DHR has to be more creative, diversifying the sources of our funding.

Director Wong added that nearly all programming in the Community Advocacy and Services Division is funded privately, and that the CJJP team has been successful in being awarded very competitive federal grants.

Chair Winter asked for a motion to approve the FY2017 budget.

Rudison moved to approve the FY2017 budget; seconded by Alaniz.

Chair Winter asked for any further discussion regarding the budget prior to the vote.

Rudison raised the question as to whether or not members of the Board could be reimbursed for expenses they incur while performing functions related to their work on the Board or Commissions.

Director Wong responded that unfortunately there is not sufficient budget to reimburse Board members for expenses beyond specific Department/Board/Commission events.

Seeing no further discussion, Chair Winter called for a vote to approve the FY2017 budget. The budget was passed.

5. Iowa Criminal Justice Summit

Chair Winter next asked Director Wong to share information about the Iowa Criminal Justice Summit.

Director Wong referred members to the flier in the Board packet. The summit is taking place on October 1, 2015 in Cedar Falls. Michael, Stone and Director Wong will be attending, along with a contingency of other DHR representatives.

6. Board Priorities

Chair Winter indicated that the Board's priorities were discussed in detail in the May meeting, and indicated that he did not believe additional discussion would be necessary.

7. Board Member Updates

Latino Affairs (Alaniz) Alaniz commented that it was good to see that the commissioners, the offices and DHR were becoming more aligned to become more effective in the communities we serve.

Alaniz also shared that he had invited Stone to speak to the Multicultural Health Advisory Committee of the Department of Public Health. The entities have many common objectives.

Alaniz indicated that he will be attending a Latino conference in Ankeny on October 20th that Alaniz will be attending, and he is also planning to attend a conference on October 1 in Iowa City.

Alaniz shared information on community outreach, particularly in counties where new employers have located in a community and are hiring Latino workers. Alaniz has been meeting with a company, Hill Phoenix. They have locations in Keosauqua and Centerville; this company wishes to remain in Iowa and needs to have a strong and viable labor force. He suggested it was important for the Commissions and the Department to examine their respective role in meeting the needs in these communities, and perhaps providing information about economic development and workforce planning.

Wong suggested that it would be good to engage with Iowa Workforce Development to discuss existing resources for workforce planning.

Alaniz concluded with a brief overview of a movie he once saw where a little boy didn't understand why other people in the community hated him. He soon learned that because of his background, he was "the face of the enemy." He used this to illustrate that this is the way many people in Iowa see Latinos - they are the face of the enemy, because people erroneously believe they are taking away employment, not paying taxes or draining our educational and health systems. He feels this is why

it is so important to educate not only Latinos on the culture of Iowa but to also educate Iowans on Latino culture as well.

Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (Jung) Jung shared that the Asian and Pacific Islander Commission is developing an event that will be a panel discussion event on civic and public engagement. The event is still in the planning stage; however, the time frame will be sometime in late October or early November. This initiative stems from the legislative breakfast in March which was the first in many years. That event focused on three areas: health, education and employment. These seem to be common issues to all commissions.

The panel discussion is one way to create more visibility and elevate the issues that are important in API communities. The commission wants to take the lead in changing the mindset that API is a silent and invisible minority. The commission is still working on the lineup of panelists and marketing efforts to get people to attend.

Native American Affairs (Mackey) Mackey reported that the commission will be meeting on September 28th. There is still a focus on Native Americans who are incarcerated. This continues to be an ongoing issue. The commission is working with some professionals to set up ways to provide information, and perhaps assistance, for women who are incarcerated.

Criminal Justice (Soich) Soich reported that the commission was meeting tomorrow.

Status of African Americans (Rudison) Rudison reported there had been a great deal of activity on behalf of the commission including:

- Speaking with the Governor and the Directors of economic development for Iowa City and Cedar Rapids about continued initiatives to help minority owned businesses.
- Attending the Iowa City school board meeting to hear discussion regarding the large population of African Americans moving from Chicago and surrounding areas, resulting in a rapidly changing demographics and an increased focus on the issue of cultural competency. Rudison discussed the need to examine inclusion when we think about diversity.
- Discussing mental health care issues with Director Palmer of the Department of Human Services at the last Commission meeting.
- Attending the Iowa Summit on Justice and Disparity. Rudison indicated that there is a need to find better options for non-violent ex-offenders to transition back into society. However, in most cases, they aren't ready and go right back to jail. There should be some programming that will help try to reduce recidivism.

Chair Winter responded to Rudison's report indicating he had raised several important issues. He described a project that is going on in Waterloo called Tech Works. A group of young entrepreneurs out of San Francisco developed the concept where they provide the facility and the equipment, and entrepreneurs can share the equipment and the space to get started - anything from a 3-D printer to

just regular tools they can use to begin a start-up business. This seems to be a real opportunity for minority entrepreneurial growth referenced earlier. It's the first one in the Midwest, so it will be interesting to see how it continues to develop.

Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning (Michael) Michael directed Board members to the summary in the board packet for the Division's activities.

Michael provided a staff update. A new criminal justice information system coordinator, Tammy Blackstone, started last week. Hopefully, another position will be filled soon – that of a statistical research analyst which will focus on juvenile justice data and research.

Michael recapped the meetings held around the state this summer for the CASP report. These meetings were held in Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, and Iowa City. All of those are new sites for the DMC and the juvenile detention alternatives effort. The next meeting is going to be in Dubuque in October, and then in Fort Dodge in the near future. In each case, similar types of people attend the meetings: school representatives, lawyers, county attorneys, judges, law enforcement and juvenile court officers.

Each location identifies the need for change, but how they will get there is still the big question. He referenced a program in Iowa City that uses diversion strategies so that the kids never go into the system.

Michael also mentioned that the Annie E. Casey Foundation is hosting a juvenile alternatives initiative national conference that is focused on how to keep youth out of juvenile detention centers. Iowa has thirteen individuals attending, including a judge from each of the judicial districts, juvenile court officers from around the state going, and a state senator. Michael will represent the Department.

Michael indicated that during the past legislative session there was a lot of interest in human trafficking. The Department's staff has put together a report about how this is currently being managed.

Community Action Agencies (McKim) McKim shared information and data regarding past due accounts and the number of disconnections for customers of investor owned utilities. In July 2015 in Iowa, there were \$24.8 million in past due accounts, with over 80,000 notices of disconnection. There were 4790 disconnected households.

McKim discussed the ramifications of these numbers, and that this isn't just an energy issue. It is important to consider that other personal needs are not being met to afford heating, and then it becomes a health, life and safety issue.

McKim indicated that the low cost of propane this year is very positive. However, we need to keep in mind that the Iowa moratorium law protects individuals by preventing

the disconnection of their gas or electric from November 1st through the end of March. As much as possible, the agency is working with eligible individuals to provide resources and assistance in October to protect them from being disconnected.

Alaniz asked if McKim had been involved in any discussions with the Red Cross. McKim indicated that there had been no formal discussion, but they do receive our state plan. Alaniz indicated that he would like to have further discussions with McKim on this particular issue and how connections might be made with the Red Cross since the energy affordability/disconnection issues can lead to emergencies, such as fires from candles or other un-safe heat and light sources.

Community Advocacy and Services (Stone) Stone stated that the Board has had a good discussion about the CAS strategic planning effort. One of the key organizational goals is to identify the areas of need that are common among our populations and engage both the Offices and Commissions to work together on those specific strategies. It is important that we concentrate our attention on making measurable change, and that we communicate effectively about the results.

Stone indicated that it is exciting to see that Board members want to be connected with the Division's plan. As a team, the Division will be providing Board members and Commissioners with details about the plan and requests for participation in carrying out specific actions. We want to work with all of you to generate more positive visibility, and results, for the populations served by CAS.

Stone repeated the three main areas of initial focus: 1) improved language access; 2) improved civic participation and engagement, and 3) bringing youth on board.

Stone highlighted the Iowa Women and the Law Guide that is available on the Department's web site. It is not just for women, it is a tremendous for everyone. In addition, she reminded everyone that the Latino Festival is being held here in Des Moines on September 26th and 27th and the Commission of Latino Affairs will staff a booth in collaboration with the Department of Administrative Services.

8. Public Comment

No members of the public were in attendance.

9. Next Meeting

Chair Winter indicated that the next meeting of the Board will be in November, with the agenda item to approve the Department's Annual Report.

Director Wong added that there should be more discussion in November about DHR Day and the options for doing something like it again, since it provides a great opportunity for commissioners to meet with legislators.

10. Adjourn

Chair Winter offered a closing comment; listening to all the reports, he heard the concerns and challenges still needing to be addressed, which could easily become discouraging. Yet in each report, he could also hear the commitment and hope that changes can happen. He then thanked everyone for their efforts and work.

Chair Winter asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Rudison and seconded by Jung. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.